



U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Division of Publications
Press Service



Release - Immediate.

6/3/21

WILD FOWL NEED PROTECTION
AND FEEDING GROUNDS

- - -

Although legislative measures for the protection of wild fowl have multiplied, and have added to the restrictions on hunters, these regulations have not been sufficient to maintain these game birds in their former abundance. Regions that once were the summer homes of myriads of wild ducks have been drained and placed under cultivation, and extensive areas where the birds at one time bred are now populous farming communities. These changes, say biologists of the United States Department of Agriculture, have crowded out the former feathered residents and have served in a corresponding degree to reduce their numbers. Realization of these facts has led recently to the adoption of other measures to encourage waterfowl. A number of extensive marsh areas have been made permanent refuges under the guardianship of the Department of Agriculture, and many private preserves, some formed by artificial means, have been established where the birds are protected while nesting. In addition, in a number of cases, rigid local restrictions have been placed upon hunters.

As a means of cooperating in such efforts to maintain and increase the numbers of waterfowl, the Biological Survey of the United States Department of Agriculture has undertaken investigations of the general conditions under which wild ducks live and thrive, coupled with counts of the birds found in areas varying in character. During three summers, field studies were made dealing with wild ducks in the Bear River marshes in Utah, a report of which has just been published by the department in Department Bulletin 936, Wild Ducks and Duck Foods of the Bear

River Marshes, Utah.

During the three seasons devoted to this work, 12 species of ducks and the Canada goose were found breeding in the region included in the Bear River marshes, which covers an extensive area at the northern end of Great Salt Lake. In an enumeration made during May and June, 1916, of the 11 species of breeding ducks, 3,650 pairs were counted, and it is believed that this number represents between 60 and 100 per cent of the total number of breeding ducks occurring there that season. Allowing 5 young reared to maturity as the average for each pair, and considering 1916 as an average season, the bulletin states that, at a conservative estimate, between 25,000 and 30,000 wild ducks, native to the marsh, are to be found there at the close of the breeding season.

It was found that, in addition to the large number of birds reared on the Bear River area, many other ducks came in after the nesting season to remain there until fall. That birds from the Bear River section range widely after leaving these marshes has been shown by records of ducks that have been banded and released there and subsequently were shot elsewhere. Records thus obtained show that birds released near the mouth of Bear River in migration cover the region from Oklahoma to Texas and west to California. The department urges the establishment of a greater number of preserves where wild fowl may breed and rest unmolested, and find an ample supply of food.